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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

THE REUTHER PROPOSALS

WALTER REUTHER has seized the initiative again, this time with a proposal that profit-sharing be extended to the auto industry. According to his plan, one-quarter of all profits over ten per cent of net capital would go to the workers, one-quarter to auto buyers in the form of rebates, and the remaining fifty per cent to the stockholders. The auto companies took one quick look at Mr. Reuther's proposal, shuddered and gave it a quick brush-off, much as they tried to do with his "annual wage" plan when that first came up.

Ernest Breech, chairman of the board at Ford, said the plan "strikes at the very roots of the economic system that has made and kept America strong." Harold H. Curtice, president of General Motors, described it as "foreign to the concept of American free enterprise system." Spokesmen for the smaller companies followed suit, and some editorial writers on large newspapers waxed indignant over what they saw as a threat to the capitalistic system—although wanting a larger share of the profits might seem orthodox enough for Adam Smith himself.

Walter Reuther has always taken a broad view of collective bargaining, refusing to limit it simply to wages and hours. In this case, however, it is impossible at this point to tell just how seriously he intends his proposal to be taken. His suggestion that rebates be made to car-owners has aroused considerable resentment inside the industry, but this section of the Reuther plan may represent primarily recognition of the fact that there are many more car-buyers than there are shareholders, since Mr. Reuther is an old hand at the art of going over the heads of management to win the sympathy of the general public.

When the time actually comes to sit down and bargain, it may very well turn out this time that Mr. Reuther is trying to go too far, too fast. Collective bargaining is a two-way process, and it is unlikely that the U.A.W. will get all it is now asking for. Meantime, though, we hope these latest proposals by Mr. Reuther will provoke serious discussion, rather than partisan enthusiasm or partisan dismissal. For whether one likes Mr. Reuther's ideas or dislikes them, they almost always have the merit of raising fundamental questions which need to be explored.

IN A PERIOD of sagging sales and mounting unemployment, basic questions about the nature and direction of our economy have particular relevance right now. Have we learned the reasons for sharp dips in the economic cycle? More importantly, do we really know very much about controlling them? Is an economy like ours doomed to the pattern of boom-and-bust? Four million unemployed do not add up to a serious recession; they do provide a good opportunity for us to see how the experience of the New Deal in "priming the pump" can be used.

Here is an issue on which labor and management have always differed. Management still tends to adopt a laissez-faire attitude toward economic cycles. Labor refuses to accept the notion that such cycles are inevitable, at least on any major scale. Judging from Mr. Eisenhower's recent remarks about deficit financing and the pump-priming efforts being made in Washington, this Administration shares labor's views, at least to the extent that it does not accept recessions as inevitable natural catastrophes about which nothing can be done.

In an Administration pledged to "conservatism," this is real progress; it represents bipartisan recognition of the fact that a depression would be a ma-

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jor catastrophe for us and the free world, and that one cannot simply be allowed to "run its course" without the use of remedial measures by the government. But more study is needed to determine whether or not the heritage of New Deal legislation under which the government operates in this area is actually adequate for the nature of the task. And as far as the immediate issue is concerned, further exploration is required of the shifting roles of capital, labor and management in a changing society.

When labor leaders make proposals like that of Mr. Reuther, they are charged with intruding in areas normally reserved to management. But in our mass industries the relationship between capital, management and labor is quite different from that between the owner of a small store and his clerks. Mr. Reuther is speaking for thousands of auto workers who obviously have a special stake in the industry. Management is speaking for thousands of shareholders who are the owners of the corporation but many of whom have little connection with the direction or management of the company. In this situation, the traditional concepts often do not match the facts of modern economic life.

As the corporate form becomes increasingly characteristic of the nation's economic life, it is imperative that we think in terms of the challenges of the future rather than carry on the tired debates of the past. Massive groupings of capital and labor represent concentrated economic-political power of a kind unique in history. In this case, for example, a labor-management pact in the auto industry will have an immediate and substantial effect on the welfare of the entire nation. Yet there is no one to speak for the common good in these matters, unless one counts an occasional suggestion like that of Mr. Reuther about rebates to purchasers.

All these questions—about boom-and-bust, about the changing character of the American economy, about the role and effectiveness of government in economic affairs, about safeguarding the common good—are too large for anyone to expect Mr. Reuther and the auto companies to solve them alone. But answers to such questions are needed, and these answers will come only if serious attention is given to the unsolved problems of our national economy. We hope, therefore, that Mr. Reuther's proposals and the auto companies' counter-proposals receive a wide and thorough discussion, and that this discussion is carried on in terms more meaningful than the usual heated exchanges surrounding the collective bargaining process.

THE PRESIDENT'S REPLY

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER'S reply to Premier Nikolai Bulganin has done much to counter the political offensive so skillfully carried on by the Russian leaders. Mr. Bulganin's series of notes were, given his purposes, expertly timed, and they were well-calculated to gain a favorable response from both those who are wearied and those who are optimistic.

The first series, issued just before the Paris NATO meeting, not only tended to divide the Western leaders, but also diverted attention from positive results of the meeting. The second series, with repeated requests for new summit talks, distracted attention from the President's State of the Union message, increased popular demand for East-West talks, and made some considered reply more necessary. Mr. Bulganin's second series of notes did, however, follow so rapidly upon the first that even those Western leaders who were favorably disposed to his earlier suggestions viewed his subsequent requests with a more critical eye.

The President's reply was wisely calculated to reveal what was clearly propagandistic in the Bulganin letters; to set desirable pre-conditions for talks between heads of governments; and to show a desire to cooperate in questions of world-wide significance and interest. He correctly and succinctly pointed out that a separate nuclear weapon ban was unnecessary since the U.N. Charter precluded use of nuclear weapons for aggressive purposes. The Charter also rendered unnecessary a mutual non-aggression pact or another agreement to renounce the use of force in the Middle East. What is already agreed upon, he implied, need be discussed again only for reasons which are clearly propagandistic.

The President did not completely dismiss the possibility of a summit meeting which would involve him and the Soviet leaders. He did emphasize that the basis of such a talk should be not merely a strong hope that some significant agreement could be reached, but a reasonable probability. And the probability should derive from preparatory meetings between ambassadors or foreign ministers. Other governments, he stated, should participate in a discussion of those matters which affect their countries.

The President then mildly but firmly objected to two further proposals of the Russian premier, and he added one of his own suggesting that outer space be denied to purposes of war and be exploited for peaceful purposes.

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Although the NATO allies largely followed the lead of the President's letter, popular and editorial opinion in the Western world was not entirely swayed. The most sensible criticism was that President Eisenhower did not make more positive suggestions. There is some merit to this criticism, but since this reply was more politically effective than most of our foreign policy statements the objection seems misplaced.

And few of those who were highly critical dealt with the failure of the Geneva summit meeting, the possibility if not the likelihood of another failure, and the subsequent frustration and depression that another failure would surely entail.

The President's letter and the recent press conference of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who further developed the present U.S. position, are, taken together, encouraging. They show a combination of toughness and flexibility for which the present Administration is not noted. And they reveal a growing awareness of potentialities which the Russians have been exploiting for years, the potentialities of political offensives.

FARM POLICY

IN HIS UNWAVERING support of Secretary Benson, President Eisenhower manifests a loyalty somewhat akin to his attitude toward John Foster Dulles. In both cases he voices continuing support in the face of increasing criticism; and in both farm and foreign policies the President calls for little in the way of major change. But in the matter of surpluses and crop supports the Government's program is much more of a heritage from previous Administrations—a system of benefits, for a group caught in the cost-price squeeze, which it has not seemed politically feasible to reduce to any extent.

There is something basically sound in the President's plea that the country should face up to the situation resulting from American agriculture's increased productive capacity. Ever since the war, mechanization and improved strains have achieved sharp increases per acre; with present methods one worker on the land can produce the food and fiber requirements of twenty of his compatriots, in addition to his own. This continuing trend has more than offset the curtailment from acreages withdrawn from cultivation under "soil conservation" and other Department of Agriculture programs. Fewer acres have produced bigger crops.

Some of the latest ways advocated by the Administration for taking our unparalleled productivity into account have a familiar ring. Among these is an effort to find new industrial uses for raw materials produced on the American farm, an idea that goes back at least a quarter century. Large-scale disposal of farm surpluses abroad is also of long standing. The sale of these commodities for local currencies has reached peak proportions in recent years, and it is doubtful that present levels can even be maintained. There is little hope of cutting surplus stocks further, or of making a dent in record crops, by dint of increasing sales abroad through the means employed so far—even though the majority of the people in the world are still ill-clothed and ill-fed.

Certain of the changes the President advocates will encounter serious opposition in Congress. The representative of a specific commodity interest will resist any lowering of the support level on commodities produced in his state or district and the champions of specific commodity supports will work together. Yet the President's program does have in view one very definite abuse in seeking to confine price supports on cotton to those grades above a certain quality only; the bales piled up in government warehouses now are for the most part an inferior grade and of little practical use. Another decided improvement, if it is adopted, will be the ending of the automatic flexible support provisions whereby reduction of surplus stocks of a commodity brings about a raising of the support rate—which has proved to be a stimulus to produce new surpluses.

The program most lays itself open to criticism on two counts. The first is a general failure to meet the chronic surplus problem, the nature of which is pretty well outlined. It is difficult to believe that the President's various detailed emendations plus the continuing basic policies add up to an adequate answer. Secondly, there are intimations that Secretary Benson sets much store by a program of retiring farm land from cultivation permanently. He has most in mind those marginal acres on which many of our most inefficient farmers eke out a livelihood. It is not these farms, but rather the most successful producers, that create the surplus problem. Moreover, inefficiency on the farm is no guarantee of success in industry but rather the opposite. Most of these people are undoubtedly better off on the land than they would be among the frequently unemployed or in city slums. What needs to be found is an economically, politically and socially feasible means of regulating the big producers.

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INDIANS ROUT THE KLAN

ONE OF THOSE improbable incidents involving segregation and the Ku Klux Klan occurred recently in Robeson County, North Carolina. Robeson County has not two sets of schools, restaurants, washrooms, etc., but three: for whites, for Negroes, and for Indians. The K.K.K., whose slogan has always been, of course, "100 per cent Americanism," became disturbed recently when it looked like race barriers were going to fall. They first expressed their displeasure in their usual fashion: two large crosses were set afire on Indian property.

Following that, a large group of Klansmen gathered by night to consider the outrage that was being visited upon them. Suddenly a group of Indians, firing squirrel rifles into the air and whooping up what were described as "embarrassed war whoops," descended upon the Klansmen and, after a slight scuffle, dispersed them. Although the local police did not prevent the clash, it perhaps stopped a real riot by the early use of tear gas.

One must regret any clash that stems from racial antagonisms, even when it ends, as did this, with no serious damage. But it is rare that even the Klan has its stupidity so blatantly exposed. And it is difficult not to respond with warm sympathies to those American Indians who attempted to revert, however weakly, to ancient Indian customs in order to protect their rights as Americans.

COMMUTER SERVICE

THE OLD-HAND train commuter becomes somewhat startled these especially icy mornings when he has difficulty in securing his accustomed seat. He realizes that something is amiss as crowding intensifies because of the unwonted presence of many who normally drive to town or go by bus. If said commuter happens to be having a particularly bad morning, he may look back to the old days when trains were plentiful, commutation tickets cheap and service better. He may dwell dolefully on the succession of fare raises, the ending of ferryboat services, the greatly reduced number of trains and other grievances. He may ponder testily on whom to pin the blame.

Despite the flight to the suburbs and a steady increase in business activity, total traffic on commuting trains has greatly dwindled. Railroads tend to find it the most uneconomic of their operations. The reasons for excessive costs are many. Except for the brief morning and evening rush hours, a costly plant is lying idle, yet requiring extensive operating and maintenance personnel and incurring the taxes assessed on the valuable land comprising the right of way. Yet competition along the highways sets limits to commutation rates.

Even when smaller stations are closed down, branch lines discontinued and the number of trains severely cut, shrinking passenger revenues may still fall short of meeting expenses. And when the railroads' major source of revenue, freight traffic, is reduced by the competition of trucking and pipelines, there is less margin in which to absorb losses from their commuter service. (The margin on longer passenger hauls has long since faded due to the competition of planes and buses.)

However, the American railroad is something more than another large business enterprise able to shut down unprofitable operations as its management sees fit. There are often parallel means of transportation, but the railroad is still an essential utility on which the public is dependent. Its services cannot be discontinued at will, but have to be maintained in the public interest. Where a thorough and impartial scrutiny of a railroad's books does disclose inability to continue vital services, public authorities will have to step in to provide well-supervised subsidies, tax relief or other remedies. A viable means of reducing the railroads' extensive fixed indebtedness and interest charges would greatly help. But in any case essential public services must be kept open regardless of departmental losses or corporation profits.

THE COMMUNIST PATTERN

ONCE AGAIN, the plight of the writers is one of the best indications of the repressive conditions which exist in Communist controlled countries. The latest news issues from Bulgaria. Many Bulgarians were deeply shaken by the revelations of Stalin's crimes which Khrushchev made during the Twentieth Party Congress. The writers, naturally, were among the most articulate. They lampooned previous works which eulogized Communist leaders, called for less censorship, and directed attention to "undesirable" aspects of life in Communist countries.

Now these writers are told that they have gone too far. Those who do not modify their views and admit their errors will be disciplined. They can go on writing; they simply will not be published. The familiar pattern fulfills itself.

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Religion in the Catholic College

In practice, religion teachers seem to enjoy just about the same degree of academic prestige as that accorded to the members of the physical training staff

by JAMES J. MAGUIRE

THE STATUS generally accorded to the religion department in the Catholic college is curious to the point of paradox. Theoretically the religion department is the crowning glory, the cornerstone for the sake of which the whole edifice of American Catholic higher education was so laboriously raised. In practice, religion teachers seem to enjoy just about the same degree of academic prestige as that accorded to members of the physical training staff. Introduced to any average group as "a professor at Notre Dame" one notices the respectful, flattering attention. "And what do you teach, Father?" "Religion." The let-down is painfully obvious. For a moment they had imagined that you really were a professor, an intellectual. Now they know that you are a "professor" only by courtesy, like members of the coaching staff, that your real job is to conduct either catechism classes or informal "bull-sessions" which, out of deference, happen to be listed in the catalogue as courses.

This low estimate of the religion department's academic rating seems to be standard equipment among entering freshmen. As one College of Science freshman put it, "Frankly, Father, my high school apologetics course was good enough for me. What I expected to get out of your course was not more knowledge but only a good mark to pull up my average for medical school." He didn't think he was being brash in saying this, because he knew that this was very much the common expectation. The average freshman's reaction to the realization that it is possible to fail a religion course is shocked disbelief. Religion is supposed to be a "snap course" in which better than average grades can be confidently expected. In any case, the grades are seen not as a measure of intellectual achievement but of piety and good will.

Father Maguire is a member of the Religion department at the University of Notre Dame.

It would be consoling to say that this stereotype represented nothing more than a popular misunderstanding. Unfortunately, statistics published as late as 1952 by Father Roland Simonitsch, C.S.C., show that in eighty-six per cent of the institutions studied religion grades were higher than over-all school averages. Father Simonitsch's research also revealed that sixty-eight per cent of the religion teachers were part-time, drawn from parish work, other departments or school administration. In fifty-four per cent of the cases administrators frankly admitted that academically their standards were not acceptable. This failing was attributed to lack of adequate teacher supply, training and permanency; to improper credit arrangement (such as the practice of giving one hour's credit for a two-hour course); and to lack of departmental organization.

MUCH, of course, has changed in the years since these figures were gathered. But in such matters it frequently happens that the chorus of popular protest reaches its peak only after remedies have been sought and inaugurated. Today it is no secret that the chorus of criticism about the caliber of religion-teaching is particularly loud, and, oddly enough, it is loudest in the most unexpected places—louder, for example, in rectories and in faculty rooms than in student dormitories. This could be a sign of health. Yet after all possible consolation has been drawn from the fact that much of the criticism that is heard is actually self-criticism, there remains the fact that serious shortcomings do exist in the teaching of college religion courses and that the problem is still far from final solution.

For a proper evaluation of the problem, however, there is one type of criticism which must be repudiated. This is the optimistic, typically American suggestion

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that the real difficulty lies in the budget. As a priest friend—not a teacher—put it, "Better men ought to be placed in this field, more money spent on their training and no expense spared in procuring outstanding teachers from all over the country." Meritorious as such suggestions always are, it must nevertheless be said that casual, uncritical methods of selecting religion teachers have always been only a symptom, the result rather than the cause of the low academic status of the religion department.

The fact that a kind of academic squeeze play has been involved does account for part of the difficulty. On the one side there were the requirements of the accrediting agencies and on the other a variety of limitations in the way of personnel, funds and credit hours. Compromises were made and in many cases religion departments did become the Cinderellas of the campus. Nevertheless, the underlying excuse for the compromise was pedagogical, or to be more exact, the excuse was that nothing pedagogically vital was sacrificed by such compromises. The simple fact is that the Catholic college administrators of yesteryear were not convinced that a scientifically taught theology curriculum was either necessary or feasible.

THE REAL CRITICISM that must be leveled at the religious education of the last several decades is that it was too closely geared to the "felt needs" of the students. Odd as it may sound, it was not a "felt need" for theological learning that filled Catholic colleges. For the rank and file the advantage of the Catholic college lay in the general religious atmosphere, in the ready access to the Sacraments and in assured protection from Communist, agnostic and secularist influences. All students do love to discuss religion and sex, and as members of a hitherto culturally isolated minority, Catholic students are interested in apologetic questions. Yet, in typically American fashion, they are distressingly practical and exceedingly impatient with anything resembling a thorough analysis of principle. What they want are ready replies to difficulties and push-button verdicts on moral problems.

Even today the average entering freshman seems to look upon the religion course much as the moderately competent driver might envision an advanced course in "driver training." Mildly interested in the fine points of traffic safety and even somewhat concerned with "what goes on under the hood," nevertheless he would not normally be interested in a complete course in automotive mechanics, let alone engineering. He would be interested in knowing how to deal with minor emergencies but his interest in the course would be tempered by the knowledge that if serious trouble did arise he would never attempt to be his own mechanic. For the fulfillment of such modest demands a religion course conducted on the general lines of a dormitory bull session is quite satisfactory. Nor is there any reason why the conduct of such sessions cannot safely be left to the garrulous but kindly chaplain, the retired missionary or the zealous (even though pedagogically unqualified) parish assistant.

Actually, this casual, pragmatic approach has never seemed entirely satisfactory either to students or to faculty. Students grow as tired of the rambling approach as they do of the traditional catechetical method. Faculty members are uneasy at the apparent betrayal of the queen of the sciences. What, however, is the alternative?

ON THE SURFACE, it would seem that the obvious remedy is simply to set up a more demanding syllabus and to implement it by utilizing all the standard forms of academic compulsion. However, on this latter point it must be noted that in religion even more than in other disciplines there are definite limits to what can be accomplished by the academic version of the big stick. In many courses students can be made to absorb details which they consider to be of doubtful relevance. They may resent having to do this but the emotional block that would otherwise hamper the learning process is tempered by the suspicion that the teacher might just possibly have a good reason for the demand. In religion courses, however, their emotional resistance to the labor of absorbing what they consider unnecessary frills and refinements can be quite passionate. The result is often not merely an unwillingness but a lessened ability to learn.

Nor is the task of setting up an academically respectable theology curriculum as simple as it may sound. It is easy to compose a syllabus that reads impressively in the college catalogue, but the final test is what actually emerges in the classroom. A prime difficulty in the past was that the only model for an intellectually respectable religion course seemed to be the seminary curriculum. Not only did this seem to be the only standard of comparision for the ordering of the subjects, but it also seemed essential to preserve as much as possible of the rounded completeness found in that curriculum. Great as was the difference between the time allotted in the seminary and the time available in college, it did seem just barely possible, by judicious watering-down, to adapt this total synthesis for undergraduate consumption.

The booby-trap in this approach is that the seminary course itself is something less than a strictly scientific curriculum. A seminary is in fact a professional school, in much the same sense that a medical school is. As such, it already represents a highly condensed (or, if you will, a slightly watered-down) version of theology. In the professional school it is essential that

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the student be given some acquaintance with all the fields of the subject, and as a consequence large amounts of knowledge have to be boiled down and then served to the students in the form of predigested pellets. In the teaching of theology this technique is particularly noticeable in the field of Scriptural and Patristic analysis. When such digests are further condensed to fit a twelve-hour course, the product that emerges in the classroom bears a closer resemblance to catechism than it does to scientific theology. As the teacher puts it forth it may sound very rational and coherent, but to the student it too frequently means that instead of merely memorizing catechism answers, he must now memorize arguments and explanations which also elude his comprehension.

A variation on this approach is to cut short the positive side of theology and to concentrate on the speculative elements in a synthesis such as that of Aquinas. Here the danger lies in the very perfection of the system itself. Because it is so beautifully articulated it can readily be boiled down into a self-enclosed scheme of definitions and theorems. Given the unfortunate shortness of time (and the prevalent passion for the rounded syllabus), that temptation can become irresistible. Actually, given a proper amount of time, the teacher could utilize to great profit the same sort of dialectical approach employed by Thomas himself. This would entail not merely a leisured consideration of the objections with which St. Thomas prefaces his own teaching but, more particularly, the substitution of modern objections which are more relevant to the questions the student might ask or ought to be stimulated to ask. In other words, the material should be related to those larger cultural and historical issues which presumably become real questions to anyone in the process of acquiring a liberal education. Of course, this can hardly be done if the student is not in the process of acquiring a liberal education, but in that case what he really needs is not theology but some form of instruction suitable to his educational level. He can be taught the content of the Church's definitions, he can be given some elements of apologetics and a further acquaintance with the conclusions of moral theology, but if he has no sense of the meaning of history it is pointless to expose him to theology.

THIS ARGUMENT may seem to suggest large and highly debatable questions about theological method, but in the present pedagogical context it hardly seems debatable to assert that there is little point in forcing on the student what Father Gustave Weigel has called "answers to questions he did not raise and whose historical significance he does not know." The first step in any real education, theological not excepted, is to get the student to ask the pertinent questions. When the average student enters college the needs he feels are not those pertinent to the transmission of genuine theological knowledge, and the questions he asks are those which even the most academically unrespectable religion departments have been answering for decades. Considered from this point of view, it can be said that Catholic colleges have for a long time been filling, more or less adequately, those religious needs which the student brings to college with him. The real criticism of the Catholic college is that it has not more generally stimulated those needs and prompted those questions that would make the students see the theology course as an exciting and intellectually necessary venture.

This failure is not primarily a fault of the religion department but a defect of the curriculum as a whole. The basic lack is that there has been little liberalizing influence. On this score, of course, we need not beat our breasts quite as loudly as we have been doing in the matter of scientific training, since there is precious little evidence of liberalizing influence anywhere in American education. In a recent survey sponsored by the Hazen Foundation, for example, Professor Jacobs of the University of Pennsylvania was forced to the conclusion that while techniques, skills and the scientific knowledge related to those skills were being imparted, there was almost no evidence anywhere of curriculum impact on the values of the students.

Yet the fact that our shortcoming is typically American does not completely exonerate us. Nor does the fact that we have so recently been an immigrant people. The preservation of the tradition of liberal education is supposedly the special glory of the religiously oriented college. The real tip-off comes if we ask why there should be a special connection between liberal education and religious orientation. If by religious orientation we simply mean a generally devout atmosphere and the exclusion of secular influences, the answer is that there is no connection. If there is to be a connection, the religious orientation must lie not merely in the personal lives of faculty and students but in the mutual cross-fertilization between the religion department and the other departments in the humane curriculum. Where the religion department is regarded as little more than an extension of the counseling service, the situation resembles entropy.

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DEPRESSING as the picture seems, there is, however, a further alternative which I have thus far not mentioned because its values can be best measured in the light of the general campus need. This is the possibility opened up by the re-awakening of interest in Scriptural and Patristic theology. From the viewpoint of the scientific theologian the Biblical approach has both advantages and disadvantages, but pedagogically it seems to be the answer to prayer. One might hesitate to employ it as a medium of basic religious instruction for those who have no previous Catholic schooling but it is certainly a wonderful way of awakening the well instructed ones from their dogmatic slumber.

By the Biblical approach I do not mean Bible history or the "life of Christ" but rather the attempt to trace the development of doctrine in the concrete sources. Personally, I find the Old Testament section a particularly rewarding teaching experience. Getting the students to appreciate the progressive character of the Old Testament revelation means that they approach the New Testament with a fresh appreciation. I am tempted to lyricize on the doctrinal insights that can be opened up, but I shall content myself by pointing out what may be a less obvious fact, that the very necessity of delving into archeology and reconstructing cultural milieus offers innumerable vantage points from which the teacher can show how theology really does integrate and vivify other fields of study.

Although this course has now been taught for some years here at Notre Dame, I would not deny that much work remains to be done in working out the best possible syllabus. But in any case I believe it is an exceedingly viable alternative to the Scylla of unstructured discussion and the Charybdis of verbalistic schematism. In default of the liberal background that might make speculative theology pedagogically feasible, I like to think that Biblical theology might furnish the bridge from the religious needs the students feel to the liberal education they really need.

Skirmish over a Catechism

Report on a new approach to teaching catechism which divided France into two camps

by ROBERT BARRAT

IN RECENT months, something has been agitating French Catholics even more than the two sputniks —the affair of the catechism. Should one be for or against the "progressive catechism"? And was the Holy Office right in dismissing the two clerical directors of the Centers of Catechetical Research, who were initiators of new methods of teaching religion? These are the questions Catholics in France are discussing, especially the thousands of laymen who have been assisting parish priests in the teaching of Christian doctrine for a number of years.

The progressive catechism, it must be noted, is not brand new. In this domain, as in many others, the awakening to the need for adaptation and renewal goes back to the dark years of the Occupation. Pondering over the reasons for the weakness and defeat of France, Christians came to the conclusion that the problem of the apostolate to the masses had to be rethought entirely, and that the religious formation of children was one crucial aspect of the matter badly in need of attention. In a number of dioceses nearly half the baptized children had not been instructed in the catechism. In others, catechists were overwhelmed because there were not nearly enough of them. Finally, it was found that usually the teaching that was given went over the heads of the children because it was too abstract, too didactic, and without bearing on everyday life.

This situation was not, of course, peculiar to France; indeed, conditions in a number of other countries were much worse. An article in *Civiltá Cattolica* two years ago called attention to the fact that seventy per cent of the Catholics in South America lacked even a rudimentary knowledge of their religion; in Chile, for instance, scarcely more than a third of the children of school age had the benefit of the most elementary religious instruction. In England, Germany, and Italy deChristianization has made alarming progress among adults, in some measure at least because something was wrong with the methods of teaching catechism.

Family influences and social environment are important factors, of course, when people abandon the practice of their religion and lose their faith. But it is

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difficult to overestimate the influence that a more or less well-drawn-up catechism can have on the mind of a child. To cite only my own personal experience, I must say in all truth that the chaplain who taught me the rudiments of Christian Doctrine made it so irksome, and failed in a pedagogical way so lamentably, that as soon as I had received my First Communion I had only one determination—never again to set foot in a religious gathering. In the hands of this good man the teaching of the doctrine of life—which Christianity is—became deader than the doctrines of the ancient Romans or Greeks. Many young people have had the same experience. Catechism was only a supplementary course a little stranger and more incomprehensible than the other school courses and one to be learned by heart like the others.

IN 1941 the Cardinals and Archbishops decided to attack the problem directly by founding a national catechism commission and approving the appointment of a director of religious teaching in each diocese. Groups of laymen, men and women, who had worked up to then in a disorganized fashion, were regrouped under official supervision in order to pool their experiences and their research. This effort of renewal took three main directions.

First, an effort was made to utilize the discoveries made in the fields of pedagogy and child psychology. While catechism had consisted for the most part in learning questions and answers by heart, methods of active pedagogy—drawing, pantomime, singing, etc.—were now utilized. In this effort the mental age of the child was taken into special account, based on present knowledge of the stages of the development of a child's mind. For example, an awareness of the sacred can be awakened early in life but the sense of mystery develops much later; it is not until a child is nine or ten that ideas of the infinite, of eternity, will have religious value for him. From six to eight years of age he grasps well what the Eucharist as nourishment represents, but the meaning of the Eucharist as sacrifice still escapes him. Most children cannot understand what a mortal sin is until they are nine or ten; they do, on the other hand, have experience of the state of grace.

Secondly, the new approach tried to take into account the role of social environment. It becomes more and more apparent that in order to be effective the catechism must be preceded or followed by, or undertaken in conjunction with, the influence of the family, the parish, the school, various youth movements. The adaptation of the catechism should be made not only in reference to the person who receives it but also to the environment in which he lives, which may be Christian or deChristianized, technical or classical in its culture, etc. In other words, if the truths to be taught remain the same, the method and the vocabulary employed will vary in accordance with whether one addresses himself to children in an atheistic workers' district or to those of a traditionally Catholic countryside.

A most typical example of this adaptation to milieu was offered by a priest in Paris whom I encountered in 1949 when I was making a study of these problems. In this instance the catechism was a catechism closely bound to life, in the midst of life. As points of departure the abbé and his curates took happenings in their quarter and news items in the daily papers for the religious formation of their young charges. The virtue of charity was no longer an article from a code which was simply learned by heart; it was seeking out the aged who lived alone in attics, buying with one's own pocket money so many pounds of coal for a family of unemployed, collecting toys for playmates who were poor. In order to explain death and resurrection the pastor took his young people to a cemetery, where he had them adorn the abandoned graves and where the children themselves composed prayers, often as beautiful as unconscious poetry:

Heaven is to be near God
Therefore wholly happy
All together, children of God
Forever loving one another

In this case it was not only the catechism which the priest had renewed, of course; it was the whole life of his parish. The entire parish had become an apostolate in which the children were caught up and in which all the adults took part. Some catechism lessons took place at the feet of mothers; men taught the little catechumens to follow the Mass with their missals. And how could these children have remained unmoved by the unforgettable spectacle of the Confirmation of fifty-five young adults, most of them workers, by the Cardinal-Archbishop in person?

The third dimension of this catechetical research was that of re-examination of the relationship between standard catechism questions and doctrine. Here the reasoning was that any renewal based on the Biblical and liturgical movements could only aid the catechism to break through the boundaries of stereotyped treatises on dogma, morality and the Sacraments.

THE PROMOTERS of this new catechism, then, insisted on the need for a progressive adaptation to the pupil and for giving up the abuses of sheer didacticism. In taking this position they did not forget that the progress they sought was not in the content itself of the revelation given to men—which must be transmitted in its entirety—but in its exposition. Obviously, there are basic supernatural truths, such as original sin, the divinity of Christ, and the Commandments of God, which cannot be passed over in silence on the ground that a child who is going to make his First Communion is not old enough to understand them.

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The main advocates of the new method made no such mistake.

What was it that happened, then, to bring down on Abbé Coudreau and Canon Colomb, and at the same time on the thousands of catechists who had applauded their efforts, the sanctions which the French papers have played up so much? There was first of all the poor interpretation certain catechists gave of the principles of the National Catechism Center. Some of them actually believed and stated that the essential truths of Christian dogma should not be taught before the ages of eleven or twelve, that the manual of National Catechism served no real purpose and that all resort to the memorizing of formulas was to be abandoned. If great care were not taken, "catechism in life" had a tendency to go toward the extreme of a simple school of natural morality. Certain incomplete or unfortunate expressions could be found in a few of the books published by the National Center—errors which should have been not wholly unexpected, for as the proverb has it: "It is only those who do nothing who have the chance to avoid making any mistakes." But there is no denying that the campaigns of the French "integralists" contributed powerfully to the poisoning of the atmosphere.

I do not have enough space to describe in detail the conduct of the integralists in this affair. In every country there are people like them, hostile out of principle to every change. To them, everything that is new is evil because it is new. I recognize that one must not be fanatically in favor of progress, and I am the first to denounce progressivism as a doctrine which is replete with illusions. But one step that I myself refuse to take is to over-idealize the past, to believe that ever since the Christianity of the Middle Ages everything in morals, doctrine and the Church has been going downhill. Man is probably no worse and no better in the twentieth century than he was in the fourteenth, and there is probably as much faith and grasp of the things of the faith in our secularized societies as there was in the time of St. Thomas.

But our integralists accept with difficulty the fact that the institutions of contemporary society are secularized. The Franco régime does not appear to them worthy of condemnation as a dictatorship but rather of praise because it has made of Catholicism a state religion, and because it harasses Protestants and Jews. They welcome the chance to denounce before the hierarchy the efforts of those who recognize the secular character of the modern State and do their utmost to evangelize the society in which they live.

IN REALITY, the question of the catechism is part of a debate which is much deeper and more serious. In denouncing at Rome certain inadequate formulas of this canon or that catechist, the French integralists seek to defend a certain attitude toward private schools and a version of Catholic society which they see to be challenged by the new spirit of the progressive catechism.

The promoters of this catechism have often remarked that it would be more economical—in men and money—to produce a good catechism than to support the heavy expenses of keeping up a private school system which is often inferior, when French Christians do have available free public schools which have greatly improved academically in the last eighty years. But for many integralists the Catholic school is more than a school; it is the last bastion in the battle against modernism. As they would have it, the Church would be threatened with extinction if mathematics, English grammar and knitting were not learned under the sign of the Cross, and at the hands of a priest or Religious. These good people have never understood the opposite argument, that in France, at least, it may not be wise to assign priests to teach groups of fifteen or twenty young people when country and city parishes, and indeed entire milieus, such as that of technological training, are deChristianized because of the lack of priests and chaplains.

The French episcopate has consistently opposed the integralists' campaign of malevolence; on three occasions the bishops have publicly denounced it. However, the leaders of this new sort of resistance made representations to Cardinal Ottaviani, and then strong measures were taken against the two canons, Colomb and Coudreau, whom the Cardinal of Paris had congratulated for their work only last May. Only direct intervention by two French cardinals and an archbishop at the Holy See succeeded in mitigating the rigor of the sanctions first announced, and in calming the dismay of thousands of catechists.

When the excitement died down slightly, a few corrections were made in the books of the National Center, but they were not withdrawn from circulation. And the Bishop of Angers, Monsignor Chappoulie, himself one of the most ardent defenders of the Catholic schools, did not hesitate to declare it inadmissible that Catholics should view with a spirit of preconceived distrust the doctrinal value of religious teaching given to children by priests in accordance with the instructions of their bishops. Designating the directors of *Paternité-Maternité* (a review published at Angers by the integralists) as responsible for this state of mind, the Bishop wrote: "They do an evil work, for it is not sufficient to be paragons of obedience and orthodoxy in order to perform a real service for the Church. Actually these people seek to divide the Catholics of our country by unceasingly casting suspicion upon their brothers in the Faith. They welcome every chance to sow dissension, trouble minds and poison controversies." This would seem to be a fitting epilogue to what can only be described as a painful affair.

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WORDS, WORDS, AND MORE WORDS

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM remains what it was, the United States remains what it was, but we are undergoing an agonizing reappraisal of the Cold War. We hear ever more talk about "competitive coexistence" and "accommodation."

A little more than a year ago, at the time of the Hungarian revolution, these words would have seemed like an obscenity. Of course we did, as a matter of fact, "accommodate" ourselves to the results of the Soviet tanks brutally mowing down the revolutionaries, but the rhetoric of November 1956 would not have suffered use of the word. In today's "reappraisal" discussions the word is commonplace.

Five years ago the catchword was "liberation." When, at that time, The Commonweal soberly pointed out that there was no conceivable way short of war that the United States could liberate Eastern Europe, Mr. Dulles—not yet Secretary of State—wrote a letter to the magazine. He said that there *were* ways but unfortunately he could not spell them out, lest the enemy be tipped off. Mr. Dulles has been mighty powerful in the years since, but how many people, if any, have been liberated?

At the same time that Mr. Dulles wrote his letter, one who used the word "coexistence" was considered the next thing to a traitor. But we have, one way or another, "coexisted" with the Soviets ever since. Another bad word at the time was "containment," *mere* containment. In those days when Chiang Kai-shek was being "unleashed" to thunderous Congressional applause and Mr. Nixon was smilingly telling us how wonderful it was to have a Secretary of State willing to speak up to the Russians, the whole nation seemed to be drunk on fighting words. But what did they add up to? We forgot all about liberation and barely managed mere containment. We did not even assist the Hungarians when they tried to liberate themselves. Chiang Kai-shek is growing old on Formosa. No one feels one whit safer because Mr. Dulles talks back to the Russians. And it is five years later. Rhetoric may have won the election. It did not change the facts of international life.

Nor will the post-sputnik rhetoric change the facts of life today. Since the Russians launched their satellite we have all realized anew that we are scared to death of a nuclear war; almost anything seems preferable to its horrors. But that awareness will not change the fact that Communism could not be less interested in gentlemanly competition between our two systems, the may-the-better-one-win sort of thing. Talk about "competitive coexistence," as if we and the Russians were equally honorable suitors vying for the world's favor, is the stuff of dreams. If that is all there were to our differences, there would not have been any problem in the first place. If the Russians were not committed to a program of "cooperating with the Revolution" by infiltration, sabotage and outright military conquest, we should have been playing the "competitive coexistence" game long since and not have armed ourselves and half of mankind. But the Russians never were interested in vying with us on Marquess of Queensberry terms. They are not now. With the military edge now theirs they are even less interested than they once were. The Hungarians made a clear choice as to which of the two systems they preferred, and we know what happened to them.

The other word which we will be hearing more and more is "accommodation." We have of course accommodated ourselves to the gains of Communism in the sense that we have learned to live with them. In the same sense, as individuals we have accommodated ourselves to every manner of evil at large in the world. We have accommodated ourselves to the existence of thieves and robbers, but we have done so by putting locks on our doors. We have accommodated ourselves to juvenile delinquency, but we insist on police protection in Central Park.

I do not think that is what the proponents of political "accommodation" have in mind. They have in mind building a policy which would accept the fact that the Russian gains are permanent, that the evils of Soviet imperialism are going to be with us for a long time and that there is nothing we can do about them. The Hungarians did not "accommodate" themselves to these facts and we know what happened to them.

The proponents of "accommodation" have something in their favor. Frank acceptance of evil is at least less misleading than brave, bold but meaningless talk about "liberation" and "unleashing" imaginary power. But we have had experience with "accommodation." In the years before World War II Hitler told us again and again that all his territorial demands had been satisfied and that if the world would just accommodate itself to his latest grab, all would be well and we would have peace. Yet his demands were never quite satisfied.

Nazism was a dynamic movement, like Communism explained not by logic, reason or experience but by its own mad ideology. Perhaps it is time to read the Communist scriptures again. We may not take them seriously, but the Soviets do. Reading them, we will find that there is no provision in them for "accommodation." Communism just does not provide for accommodation with non-Communism. And that is *not* rhetoric.

JOHN COGLEY.

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"History," says Maritain, "is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be looked at"

The Meaning of History

by FRANCIS E. McMAHON

THE TERM "Philosophy of History" has different meanings for different people. In the sense of involving the view that history is moving forward towards a definite goal, that the entire world-process is fulfilling a purpose, it is clearly the fruit of the Judeo-Christian revelation. St. Augustine is a key figure here. In his monumental *City of God,* he vigorously assailed the doctrine of endless cycles in history. One idea dominated the Graeco-Roman world: history was a perpetual recurrence of the same events in a universe that existed eternally. For Augustine, this notion was an affront both to reason and to Divine Revelation. Did not Holy Scripture declare that the world had been created by God for a definite purpose? History had both meaning and direction for the Christian. The drama of history was the drama of eternal salvation. It was essentially a sacred history, whose central theme was the progress of the two cities into which mankind had been divided—the City of God and the City of the World—towards their respective ends of blessedness and perdition. These goals were beyond time, but the things of time—the political and social institutions of mankind, for example—were subordinated to God's transcendent purpose.

Augustine's vision of history left an ineffaceable impression upon the West. He had exploded the doctrine of endless historical cycles and invested time with significance. His viewpoint, to be sure, was mainly theological; he interpreted history in relation to the supernatural destiny of mankind. But henceforth every Western thinker—Christian or non-Christian, theist or atheist—who speculated upon the meaning of history was to be directly or indirectly influenced by him.

The Middle Ages preserved intact the substance of Augustine's thought. Its thinkers made no pretense of being able to explain every historical happening in terms of its providential purpose, but they were convinced that the least event fitted into the cosmic pattern fashioned by God. Moral evil tended to destroy the pattern, but the All-Powerful could draw out of evil even a greater good. The medieval doctors likened the progress of history to a great poem whose full meaning escapes mortal man but whose essential lines could be grasped. All things were directed towards the complete realization of the Kingdom of God. Such a goal was achieved only at the end of time. It was the earthly task of humanity to prepare, with God's grace, for this perfect Kingdom.

The Modern Age did not wholly abandon this vision of history. It simply transposed it into completely secular terms. The Kingdom of God was brought down to earth, and human reason was set up in place of Divine Grace. The shift from a theology of history to a thoroughly secularized philosophy of history did not occur abruptly. In the high Middle Ages a Cistercian monk, Joachim of Flora, was prompted by alleged inspiration to declare that the Gospel of Christ was not meant to endure until the end of the world. As the reign of the Father had given way to that of the Son, likewise the latter will give way to that of the Holy Ghost. In this third and final state, men would come into a knowledge of all truth. Theologians like Thomas Aquinas reacted strongly against this view, for they sensed that the entire economy of Christian salvation was at stake. Aquinas acknowledged there was a threefold state for mankind: the Old Law, the Law of the Gospel, and—beyond historical time—the state of the blessed. But this was quite different from prophesying the advent of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Joachim's teachings have echoed throughout modern history. Six centuries later, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, leader of the German Enlightenment, was proclaiming a "new eternal gospel" to succeed the New Testament. It was a gospel ushering in the reign of reason and human self-realization, the third and final stage for humanity. He praised the followers of Joachim. Their insights were good, though imperfect. It was not Christian Faith, but education that would bring about the blessed state. Simultaneously in France, Voltaire was divorcing sacred from secular history, and expounding the latter in terms of the idea of progress. The notion of necessary progress henceforth replaced the belief in Divine Providence. Condorcet, disciple and friend of Voltaire, declared that "the perfectibility of man is absolutely indefinite" and "can never be retrogressive." The natural sciences were the key to human happiness.

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The application of mathematics to the social science, said Condorcet, would insure the determination, with almost perfect precision, of the amount of good and evil in human society, and thereby guarantee the advancement towards the perfect social order.

THE GREAT philosophers of history of the nineteenth century, especially Comte, Hegel and Marx, continued the work of secularizing the Christian vision. All three thinkers affirmed that humanity was in progress towards a state of complete fulfillment. Comte's doctrine of the three states of mankind—the theological, the metaphysical and the scientific, in that order of ascending perfection—was a distorted and remote echo of medieval doctrine. Hegel's awesome synthesis sought to explain reality in terms of a dialectical process culminating in the freedom and consciousness of the world spirit. For Providence, Hegel substituted the "cunning of reason." This latter was an irresistible power capable of triumphing over the passions and selfish interests of men and of forwarding the historical process to its final goal.

Karl Marx found nothing basically wrong with the Hegelian synthesis, save that it needed to be turned right side up. Matter, not spirit, was at the heart of the cosmic process. By transforming the economic conditions of his existence, man could achieve earthly bliss. Perhaps more than any other secularized philosophy of history, Marxism reflects—in a wholly distorted fashion of course—the Judeo-Christian tradition. Though anti-religious and even anti-Semitic, Karl Marx could not efface from his soul the messianic dreams of his Jewish forbears. He believed in the coming of an earthly kingdom of bliss, a realm of freedom following the withering away of the state. His Chosen People were the proletariat, the children of light engaged in struggle with the children of darkness, the bourgeoisie. Science and technology were the sacramental weapons by which the forces of evil would be overcome and the new society built. And Marx saw history unrolling with strict inevitability.

Years ago Professor Etienne Gilson called attention to the durable influence of Christianity upon all modern philosophies of history. These latter, he declared, "merely replaced the transcendent end that assured the unity of the medieval synthesis, by various immanent forces that served as substitutes for God; but the enterprise was substantially the same." Why didn't these modern thinkers, when they abandoned Christian Revelation, return to the pagan doctrine of endless historical cycles? Only one man had the logic—or courage—to do this: Friedrich Nietzsche. The rest kept the shell of the Christian historical vision, but threw away the substance. And in disposing of God and the mystery of Providence, they were forced to make over human reason into an omniscient power. Philosophy of history because an *a priori* reconstruction of the cosmic process, lacking any foundation save the ingenuity of the mental processes of the philosopher. History was molded to fit pre-conceived patterns of reality. The more grandiose these reconstructions became, the more suspicion they aroused. Philosophy of history was finally discredited with the historians. In losing its modesty, it lost its reputation.

The remarkable work of Jacques Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History* (Scribner's. $3.50) should help restore that reputation. In these informal lectures—they were originally delivered at the University of Notre Dame—the author disclaims any desire to reconstruct or explain history in the manner of the rationalists. "History," he declares, "is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be looked at." Yet it is possible to penetrate this mystery to some degree. The basic requirements for such an enterprise are respect for the facts and a sound philosophy.

Reflections on the mystery of the cosmic process are no new undertaking for Maritain. Msgr. Charles Journet, the well-known theologian of the University of Fribourg, commented some years ago in the *Revue Thomiste* on the significance of Maritain's observations in this field. But these observations had not been organically synthesized. They had been made in various works devoted to other problems. They have now been brought together and put into a framework of impressive originality.

Maritain's viewpoint is that of a Christian philosopher. The latter's vision is not centered upon the Kingdom of God—this is the center of perspective of the theologian, who stands upon the heights. This is where St. Augustine stood. The philosopher is down below in the plains, grubbing in the dirt of history, and directly concerned with humanity's march through time. But Maritain is convinced that the philosopher cannot dispense with the data of theology in discussing historical man. A purely rational philosophy of history yields little fruit. Fortified, however, by the truths of theology, the philosopher can profitably analyze the drama of history in itself. He will have much to say about the Kingdom of God, but it will be from his own particular standpoint.

AT FIRST sight, history seems to resist any degree of rational analysis. The historian grasps only the singular and contingent as such; his account is about particular events and in terms of particular causes and circumstances. How can the philosopher ever draw from such data laws of general significance? The easy way out is merely to read into history one's own *a priori* principles. This was the way of Comte, Hegel and Marx, and it led to disaster. For Maritain, on the contrary, induction from the facts is the first step in the inquiry. But induction alone is not the full

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answer. It must be supplemented by the principles and conclusions of a sound philosophy.

An example clarifies the point. Historical investigation reveals a two fold and antagonistic movement in the progression of time: humanity advances simultaneously in the direction of good and in the direction of evil. Only the utterly naive today embrace the eighteenth-century doctrine of undeviating progress. Admittedly, there has been progress in a multiplicity of fields. But such progress has been accompanied by an increase of evil. Science has made magnificent conquests—at the same time, the hydrogen bomb hangs over the world. At every moment in history there is loss and gain, though the proportions can and do vary. This phenomenon of ascent and descent characteristic of history is an induction from the facts. Can philosophy account for this phenomenon in terms of necessary law? Thomistic psychology affords a limited explanation. To the extent that man is rational, he moves in the line of good. Reason in itself is essentially progressive. But reason incarnate—reason, that is, immersed in sensibility and passion—veers at once in two radically opposed directions. Man is a rational *animal*. And man's march through history is a manifestation of the double aspect of his nature. Good and evil conjointly emerge. It is the old Gospel story of the growth of the wheat and the cockle in the field of the Master. They will grow together until the end of the world.

Through this interplay of induction and philosophical analysis, mutually fortifying each other, it is possible to formulate certain laws influencing the course of history. The enterprise results in no neat and all-comprehensive pattern. The mystery is always there. And, as in other scientific disciplines, hypothesis and conjecture have their role. What laws are discernible, moreover, do not eliminate the freedom of man. The philosopher can and does conclude that technological progress is a necessary law of history. But will technological developments release men from bondage to matter or further enslave them? This is wholly contingent upon man's free will.

In two pregnant chapters Maritain discusses a number of these laws. Some are of quite universal significance, manifest at every phase of history and applicable to the whole of history itself, such as the double movement towards good and evil. Others characterize the variety of ages in human history and illuminate the relationship between historical periods. The transition from primitive man to civilized man illustrates the category of problem studied here. In fundamental terms, what distinguishes the primitive state of human culture from the civilized state? The anthropologist has the first word here, in furnishing the data for inductive generalization. The philosopher then looks for intelligible meaning. On this particular question, Maritain some years ago argued that the thinking processes of primitive man did not differ essentially from those of civilized man. The difference was but one of *state*: the intellect of primitive man was dominated by the imagination, that of the civilized man was free of such domination. Maritain's former teacher, the famous ethnologist, Professor Lucien Lévy-Bruhl of the Sorbonne, did not originally hold to this view. A few years before his death, however, Lévy-Bruhl expressed his agreement with Maritain's position. Here was a fruitful instance of the philosopher of history at work.

To what ends is humanity directed? In the penultimate chapter, "God and the Mystery of the World," Maritain takes up this profound problem. The absolutely last end is the trans-historical Kingdom of God. Maritain does not deviate a hair's breadth from Augustine's teaching on this point. It is part of the data that he, as a Christian philosopher, borrows from the fount of theology. But is there likewise a natural, terrestrial end for humanity? Here he brings to full explicitness the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas. The Bible commands man to subdue the earth. For the philosopher, this means that humanity's natural end is the conquest of freedom in the sense of autonomy. Three things are involved in this goal: mastery of nature, intellectual and moral enlightenment, and the manifestations of all the potentialities of human nature. These things are desirable in themselves—they are not *merely* means to the transcendent, other-wordly goal, although they are also means—and they correspond to the deepest aspirations of man. It will take all of history to bring them to fruition. Even then the realization will fall short of perfection. It is an illusion, our author observes, to expect an utterly perfect world. The Prince of this world is always active, always seeking to ride the back of history.

IT HAS BEEN the tragic error of secularism to regard the natural end of man as the absolutely final end. As Maritain points out, the secularist eliminates, or seeks to eliminate, the Kingdom of God from the cosmic picture, and reposes his faith in man's own efforts to achieve the fullness of freedom. In the Christian perspective, however, humanity's temporal end is at once in continuity with, and subordinated to, the supreme end of human existence. To separate the two ends, and to close the world upon itself, is to deprive the world precisely of those spiritual energies which can insure temporal fulfillment. The Gospel teaches that the world is a hateful thing and is under condemnation. It also teaches that God sent His Son into the world, not to judge it, but to save it. The texts are only apparently in contradiction. The world is hateful to the extent that it shuts itself off from God. But in so far as it allows the energies of the Gospel to penetrate and transform it, it can achieve its fullness of being.

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Maritain's thought is too rich to encompass in a brief article. I have been able to allude only to some of the major themes. His habitual point of view—fidelity to Catholic and Thomistic principle, combined with a receptiveness to all other truth wherever it may lodge—emerges again in this work. Although the treatment is informal, the book will make demands upon anyone seeking to master all of its nuances. A few diagrams help the reader over some of the rougher spots. But there is no cheap and easy way of unearthing the secrets of nature—or of history.

Over fifteen hundred years ago St. Augustine developed the first theology of history. It has been an imperishable achievement. But a Christian philosophy of history—distinct in its object and its mode of investigation—had been completely neglected. Its very possibility was ignored by many. The trail, however, has now been blazed. The path marked out will occupy the attention and labor of Thomists for many generations.

IGNATIUS AT ROME

"God has deigned to allow the
Bishop from Syria to appear
in the West, having summoned
him from the East."

"I am God's wheat . . ."
—St. Ignatius of Antioch,
To the Romans

I

Some there were at Antioch who thought to say
That I was far too old a man to run
The seas that lead to Rome, and so should stay
And let a stronger seek the Roman sun.
But I had never seen a Roman dawn;
And though this rising day would see my sight
A snuffed-out candle's setting, I was drawn
To seek imperial sun, eternal light.

II

Sheaved wheat fails if never ground
To baker's loaf. And swaying fields but dance
Without event, if never sun enough is found
To brown the tips to take the miller's chance.
No grain there was that ever lived, but died
To flower life.
O, Leaven, Grain, and Heat
Who forms my Bread, take the years I tried,
And find in them the seeds of godly Wheat.

ROBERT MULDOON, S.J.

THE SCREEN

NOT SO TOUJOURS GAI

I HAVE SOMEWHAT mixed feelings about the movie "Bonjour Tristesse," as I did about Françoise Sagan's original novel. But fortunately the book, which was effectively written in deceptively-simple prose (and which was acclaimed mainly because of the author's extreme youth), had the great advantage of being short. When stretched into a full-length movie, its plot seems much-ado-about-nothing; its story about the futile lives led by a self-centered pleasure-seeking father and daughter is better read than visualized.

The widower-father, as played by David Niven, is so shallow as he hops from one love affair to the other that he fails to hold one's interest, and his surface charm wears thin. As this playboy's seventeen-year-old daughter, Jean Seberg is better cast than she was as last year's Saint Joan; she is almost convincing in the central role of a young girl who adores her amoral father, enjoys their irresponsible life together and sees it threatened during a carefree summer on the Riviera when her father becomes engaged to a woman whose serious attitudes restrict the girl's freedom.

Deborah Kerr, who wears some very stunning clothes, makes this woman quite beautiful, but while one understands her efforts to straighten out the misguided young girl, one doubts the great love she has for the empty-headed father; and it's even harder to believe that this sensible woman's discovery of his infidelity would drive her to suicide. Although the young girl's plan to dispose of this strict and older woman is diabolic, she intends nothing so drastic. Knowing her father's weakness, she hopes to arouse his jealousy by having her neighboring boyfriend (Geoffrey Horne) and her father's former mistress (attractive Mylene Demongeot) pretend they are in love, but, in spite of her good intentions, the scheme leads to tragedy.

Otto Preminger has given his film a handsome production with the Paris scenes set in the present, photographed in a murky black-and-white and the long flashback to the Riviera summer shown in brilliant Technicolor. Arthur Laurents' script has caught the spirit and flair of the Sagan novel, but Preminger's direction of his good cast was not able to avoid the tone of artificiality that pervades the whole movie, a tone that may be due to the large number of scenes that are meant to be shocking but really aren't. The saddest part of the movie is the finale, when father and daughter realize the emptiness of their lives—or perhaps this isn't sad; although it would seem too

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late for the father, it could, at least for her, be the beginning of something better.

JAMES M. BARRIE'S "The Admirable Crichton" has been around since the beginning of the century and gave Cecil B. DeMille the plot for one of his earliest spectacular movies, "Male and Female." Now it has turned up again as an English film. Barrie's theme about social equality is obviously dated, but the movie is so well cast and acted in Ian Dalrymple's Technicolor production and under Lewis Gilbert's direction that it has great charm and attraction as a period piece.

Kenneth More is absolutely perfect as the perfect butler who is more of a snob than his master (Cecil Parker), whose advanced ideas on equality shock not only his daughters and their boyfriends but also the servants, who are definitely ill-at-ease when invited into the parlor. The bluebloods and lower classes really have a chance to mix when Parker takes his family on a yachting trip and lands, after a shipwreck, on a deserted island with his daughters, a couple of suitors, Crichton the butler and Tweeny the maid (Diane Cilento). The bluebloods prove completely incompetent, of course, while Crichton takes over and manages so efficiently that he becomes governor of the whole group. In fact, things work out so well that no one is particularly interested in being rescued. (Who can blame them? The island scenes were photographed in Bermuda.) Anyway, once they are back in England, the idyll is over and the rescued castaways have to battle civilization again. Barrie may be sentimental and old-hat, but "The Admirable Crichton" is still admirable escapist fare that does not insult your intelligence.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

COMMUNICATIONS

POST-SPUTNIK ECONOMICS

Berkeley, Cal.

TO THE EDITORS: In the weeks since sputnik The Commonweal has contributed much to the discussion of missiles. But in discussing the conclusions which should be drawn from our defeat in the missile race with Russia, most participants, it seems to me, bypass the most relevant question: is our present economic organization suitable for the requirements of politico-industrial competition with the U.S.S.R.?

The greatest danger of the situation does not lie in our temporary inferiority in some fields of military technology, but in the fact that the Russian economy is growing much faster than our own. As long as we

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could believe that lack of industrial experience in Russia was frustrating a large part of Russian industrial investment, i. e., that the new plants were operated only with low efficiency, the situation seemed tolerable. But years before sputnik, Western experts on the U.S.S.R. have reported that the Russians were rapidly gaining industrial know-how, and recent events have forced even the most tenacious optimists to accept the truth. What are we going to do in order not to be overtaken by Soviet Communism in industrial capacity, which is the basis of the power to arm and of the power to assist other nations?

The first requisite is uninterrupted full utilization of our resources. That is why the talk about increasing missile output "without unbalancing the budget" frightens me. A sizable cut in non-military spending is probably impossible without damaging our position on other fronts. Welfare programs, too, have their significance in the ideological competition in which we are engaged, quite aside from their intrinsic merit. But even if some budget items could be found which could be cancelled without weakening our position in the cold war, and if we were prepared to accept the austerity postulate even at the expense of important humanitarian values, I doubt that this would be the time to insist on a balanced budget. As our economic system is presently constituted, the full utilization of resources is assured only when purchasing power is abundant, and—except in periods of strong spontaneous business expansion, which is certainly not taking place now—there is no way to produce such abundance other than deficit financing of public expenditures. For the moment, this kind of budget policy seems the right course to me, especially because in regard to our position in the world any development of the present business recession into a depression would be about the last straw.

As a long run solution, however, the deliberate creation of an abundance of money is an unsatisfactory means to assure the full utilization of resources for the obvious reason that it leads to a gradual depreciation of the monetary unit. Although, in my opinion at least, an increase in the cost of living by three per cent annually is preferable to an additional unemployment of, say, three million workers, there is no justification for indifference to the evils of a declining purchasing power of the dollar. With the new emphasis that ought to be placed on full employment of men and industrial capacity, it is extremely important that we do not shun the question: What technique other than deficit financing may be able to prevent idleness of resources?

Such a technique is not readily available; there is no recipe that we can just pick up and apply. In the late phase of the war, however, and a short time after the end of hostilities, when we all expected a huge wave of unemployment, we had done some potentially

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fruitful thinking on the problem; but then it seemed easier to buy prosperity at the expense of slight inflation. Now we should go back to where we stopped in 1946/47. If one surveys the writings of that period, for instance the work of the National Planning Association and of the Committee for Economic Development, the symposium organized by the American Labor Conference on International Affairs, some of the work of Professor John Ryan, and the British Economic Survey for 1947, it becomes clear that a number of authors contemplated the following alternative to purely monetary or fiscal solutions of the employment problem: on the basis of present business production plans, the requirements and the supply of each physical resource should be estimated one or two years in advance. If it were discovered that any physical resource, manpower of particular skill, machine capacity of particular description, energy in particular location, is likely to be in substantial oversupply, a government agency should investigate the direction in which production plans would have to be expanded in order to take up the prospective slack, and propose policies by which such expansion can be brought about. In other words, instead of just pouring a liberal supply of money into the economy in order to create so large a demand as to keep all resources employed, and thereby risking an oversupply of purchasing power, we should try to discover specific lags in the employment of men and machines before they occur, and then take measures—monetary-fiscal policies, research for new resource uses, investment guarantees as possible examples—to prevent under-utilization. This concept has nowhere matured into a well defined policy; it merely indicated a direction in which we were once searching for a policy, and we should start groping again in the same direction.

The administrative aspects of the problem cannot be fruitfully discussed before the policy aspects have been clarified. Perhaps the Council of Economic Advisers could be so reconstructed as to fulfill the task, especially since the latter would essentially mean a spelling out of responsibilities which the Employment Act of 1946, the legal basis of the Council, has imposed on the government. Compulsory powers would hardly be required. If the government finds out, in precise terms, what ought to be done, it has many possibilities to make it profitable for business to comply. It was perhaps the greatest weakness in the discussion on economic planning during the 1930s that so many writers and speakers were concerned with the means of enforcing a plan which nobody knew how to draw up.

We do not know it now, but we may learn it if we can free ourselves from the superstition that any new, or even any more precisely formulated, economic responsibility of the government means a step on the

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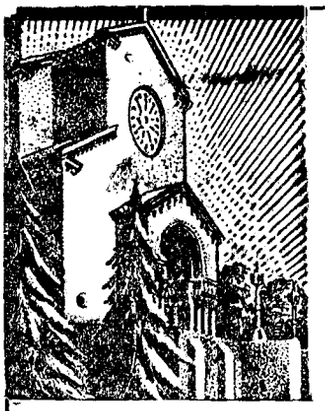

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road to serfdom. The task will be facilitated by some advances which economic theory has made since the 1930's: the development of so-called input-output analysis and linear programming. These techniques serve the purpose of clarifying the interdependence of industries, for instance, what increase not only in steel and aluminum production, but also in textile and timber output is required for a given increase in the output of aircraft; they also suggest the optimal combination of production factors, for instance under what conditions it may be better to produce a required quantity of electric energy from conventional sources or through nuclear fission. Mathematical economics has supplied the United States with better tools of economic plan-making than the Soviet Union possesses, since the latter is prevented, by Marxist bias, from availing itself of the achievements of Western economics. This is one point of superiority which may enable our side to compensate for some weaknesses which we unfortunately have permitted to arise.

CARL LANDAUER.

OF NOTE

FUNCTION OF THE FACULTY

THE FOLLOWING excerpt is taken from an address given by Father Gustave Weigel, S.J., on the occasion of the Centennial celebration of Assumption University of Windsor.

Catholic schools in Canada and the United States do not manifest a sufficient awareness of the function of the university faculty. They will admit that the professorate is the heart of any educational enterprise. Before we look for students, we must look for teachers. In some ideal order, we can easily imagine a university where the members of the faculty outnumber the students. There is little danger that this will occur in the hard world we live in, because economic pressures make it impossible. But we still set up optimum proportions for the numbers of the two corporations—perhaps one teacher to every four or five students. Certainly no one could conceive the desired ratio to be one teacher to every thirty students.

Yet the quantity of professors is not the main consideration in our examination of a faculty. The quality of the group is far more important. We Catholics have always rightly insisted that the teacher should teach. Cardinal Newman perhaps exaggerated this notion, but his defect, if it was a defect, was only one of exaggeration. The university is the social locus where learning is communicated and so teaching will

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be its essential social obligation. However, it is the word "teaching" which cries for definition. The medieval university, from which all others descend, made much of the official text—Peter Lombard, Aristotle, Galen, and Gratian. In these summaries, the tradition of a particular learning was conserved. This was the first thing the student had to learn. Hence, the idea of the medieval university was to transmit the tradition. We Catholics still accept this view of the university's task.

However, we must see how the medieval school accomplished its aims. The masters of the faculties did not communicate the contents of the textbook. This was the work of the bachelors, who were not members of the professorate but older students in pursuit of the master's degree. From the master or professor something quite different was expected. He would lecture on quodlibetals and on disputed questions. He would give the final training to the candidate for the license or degree, not so much by explaining a book to him, but rather by making him an apprentice in the professor's own work. The professor was engaged in advancing the area of knowledge. He was doing research and he made his findings public. The master took the tradition for granted and moved out from that starting point. Through his work of investigation the tradition grew, remained vital and dynamic.

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If we wish to be true to our own tradition, our professors must not be mere textbook purveyors. Less of this need be done today than formerly because the student has the textbook in his hand, in contrast with the medieval scholar, who did not have it because printing had not yet made books easily available. Our professor to be what he should be must engage in research. The question of publication is really no question. *Bonum est diffusivum sui,* is an old scholastic adage. If the professor has found something new, he will be thrilled and he will be restless until he tells others what he has found. He who searches will find. He who finds will be excited. He who is excited will talk. In reverse, he who does not talk, is not excited. He who is not excited never looked for some new phase of the wonders of reality. It is true that the good professor must publish. This "must" does not mean that it was a willed purpose of his life but rather an inevitable consequence of his proper functioning.

Here we have the true meaning of the university. It is the home of the scholar, both perfect and incipient. Without the perfect scholar, the university cannot exist, for the incipient scholars need the example of the perfect scholar to bring them to maturity . . . the elders of the community must be creative, productive, stimulating contemplatives. For Catholic institutions of learning, this must be stressed in season and out. Too often we are negative in our approach to our work. We wish to give a place to young Catholics where they will not be perverted in the acquisition of their vision of reality and then forget that the negative or apologetic approach is not enough. A college does not exist only to prevent a young person from being infected by error; it exists positively to show him truth. Nor is truth something once-and-for-all done in the past. It must be achieved anew in every generation. Our Catholic schools, more than any other, must be zealous centers of search, zest and bubbling discussion. We are not a postoffice, coldly delivering sealed letters from the past.

In consequence, our Catholic colleges need men of talent, trained in their disciplines, and intensely anxious to go ever deeper in their fields of research. Johns Hopkins University, when it began, was poor in its physical equipment. It was beginning a project which was not understood in the land. It had so much against it, but it had trained, enthusiastic searchers for truth as its faculty. Students were soon attracted from America and Canada, and the example of Hopkins transformed the education of our continent. The heads of our Catholic schools must bear this in mind, and even at the price of opposition and financial struggles, fill their schools with zealous searchers, and weed our ruthlessly the colorless, textbook commentators who are uninterested in or ignorant of their duties as searching scholars.

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THACKERAY: THE AGE OF WISDOM *(1847-1863)*. By Gordon N. Ray. McGraw Hill. $8.

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In the earlier volume, Professor Ray wrote: "Interest in Thackeray the man derives primarily from interest in his works, and this book deals as fully with his writings as with his life. Contrary to current critical orthodoxy, it is my view that the two mesh inextricably, at least in the case of a novelist like Thackeray, and that biography and criticism should go hand in hand." Professor Ray's work is indispensable to a student of Thackeray but I'm afraid that his biography, being considerably stronger than his criticism, will have to carry most of the burden.

The Age of Wisdom deals with the mature and prosperous Thackeray. Unlike Dickens, who had risen from poverty, Thackeray was well-born. He attended Charterhouse and Cambridge, lost a modest fortune in his twenties, married a woman whose sanity was soon impaired and, during his early thirties, had to write fast and often to feed and shelter himself and his children. With the publication of *Vanity Fair* (1846-48), Thackeray achieved financial security which relieved him from the pressures of journalism but which could not allay the intimate loneliness which he was to suffer for the rest of his life.

Professor Ray devotes an interesting chapter, "Longing Passion Unfulfilled," to Thackeray's relations with Jane Brookfield, the wife of a college friend. In judging Thackeray's character, and any judgment of character must be tentative, one should remember his early struggles, his loss of his wife and his far from robust health. With such things in mind one can better understand an anonymous French critic's words on Thackeray's anger as "la réaction d'une nature tendre, furieuse d'avoir été désappointée." This same man, whose strongest recommendation of Pope's character was that he loved his mother, could also turn with a cruelty in excess of the provocation upon his friend, John Forster, who some years earlier was probably instrumental in saving Thackeray's life. As I read this second volume, I was reminded of M. Maritain's remark on the sometimes bitter affections of those whose hearts get into their heads.

The most general and sustained interest in this volume comes from Professor Ray's presentation of Thackeray's intellectual position in relation to his times. Mr. Ray argues that Thackeray's importance to his contemporaries lay chiefly in his redefinition of "the gentlemanly ideal to fit a middle class rather than an aristocratic context." It is instructive to watch how Thackeray developed in order to do this. "Though *The Book of Snobs* and *Vanity Fair*," Professor Ray writes, "had seemed at times to promise an English Juvenal, under the genial influence of success Thackeray came rather to resemble Horace, 'the chosen of the eighteenth century . . . . and generally the voice of its philosophy in a prosperous country.'"

This is the Thackeray that became a "power in the country," this the Thackeray who lectured on the eighteenth-century wits and who had only to be himself in order to please the general audience and give pain to those (Macaulay for one) who knew the writers better than he. And it is the same Thackeray who wrote to his mother from America about the slaves: "They are not my men and brethren, these strange people with retreating foreheads, with great obtruding lips and jaws: with capacities for thought, pleasure, endurance quite different to mine." He went on to

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"ON LOVE is quite unAmerican, but then any real thinking on this subject would seem unAmerican. Whatever the reason, Americans do not theorize on love. . . . It would be surprising but delightful if ON LOVE were widely read in this day of the mass man and the lonely crowd."
—Kathleen Craig, in The Commonweal
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state that Mrs. Stowe's book was a distortion and that even in the cases about which she is correct ". . . in your workhouses ain't the relatives separated, and in your villages aren't the people so poor that parents murder their own children for money? . . . It's true, it's true . . . the whole scheme of life is but maimed and partial."

As Thackeray grows in age, infirmities and self-confidence, his temper becomes shorter, his concerns narrow. His field was the social order but, like many a lesser novelist, he was content to admit the existence of workhouses and slavery and to *study* the mechanics of Society. A few years after Thackeray's death, Matthew Arnold remarked that "aristocracies with their natural clinging to the established fact, their want of sense for the flux of things, for the inevitable transitoriness of human institutions, are bewildered and helpless." Mr. Ray says that this was not true in Thackeray's time. Perhaps, but we know that Thackeray, on a visit to America, found a trip from Savannah to New Orleans "unutterably depressing." Thackeray knew the potential of America; he just was not interested.

He knew, too, the potential of democracy and the only excitement he felt was a fear for the established order of things. He considered Dickens' later writings pretty much wrong-headed. "I can't but accept the world as I find it," he wrote in *Esmond,* "including a rope's end." Whatever changes might take place, Thackeray was sure that the human condition would remain the same. He therefore spent his leisure in the best company (food and wines included) that he could find; and wrote, in his most mature work, *Esmond,* what Frank O'Connor has called, hypothetically, "the perfect children's book—because in effect he [Harry Esmond] carries out the small boy's day dream of marrying his own mother."

Thackeray has been called "a strong and wise man" by no less a writer than the late Joyce Cary. So he was, in a way. After hearing a lecture by Newman on Anglican difficulties, Thackeray remarked,

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how much in jest we don't know, "It is either Rome or Babylon, and for me it is Babylon." It seems to me that his dislike of "Gothic Xtianity" was on the same plane as his estrangement from the slaves of America. Neither was quite civilized; neither fitted into the middle class English gentleman's scheme of things.

The chief fault I find with Mr. Ray's criticism as opposed to his biography is that he does too well what he set out to do: "achieve an approximation of the perspective in which his [Thackeray's] own age viewed him. . ." But a writer's stature is changed by the events and the works that come after him. Mr. Ray makes admirably clear Thackeray's importance to the mid-nineteenth century; his importance a century later seems to me still to be determined.

Elegant Flannel

GIVE ME POSSESSION. By Paul Horgan. Farrar, Straus. $3.50.

By JAMES P. DEGNAN

MR. PAUL Horgan's new novel, *Give Me Possession,* is a short book that is entirely too long. Indeed, one would not be hard put to imagine a consummate craftsman, say Mr. Hemingway, having done with it in a short story. All of which is to say that the book's outstanding weakness is structural.

Much of the novel's first division (there are three) can be written off as superfluous exposition. We are, it is true, introduced to some rather engaging minor characters, some arresting local color, and an occasional provoking aphorism. But these things fail to function interdependently; they fail to advance theme and action and truly to develop character.

It is, for example, unimportant that David Bonbright and Agatha Winlake come from the parents they do or that they are from San Francisco, although Mr. Horgan with elaborate chronologies and local color sweeps tries painfully

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to establish these incidentals as significant. The fact is that David and Agatha, "cheeerful materialists who take what they want of life," could have been born of wealthy parents in any cosmopolitan American city. A few sharp character strokes would give the reader all he needs to know and would eliminate, as James says, "all the elaborate predicates of exposition."

For all the pretension of Book I the reader is disappointed to discover (when he arrives at the story in Book II) that *Give Me Possession* is but another in the gray flannel genre, even if Mr. Horgan's flannel is a cut more elegant than Mr. Wilson's.

David Bonbright, the protagonist, is described as "intellectually . . . and ethically as incurious as a golden lion cub." He is a handsome, extremely popular, totally self-centered young hedonist with a $12,000 per year advertising job, his own boat and a beautiful wife, Agatha, who is the daughter of the richest man in town. But alas, he doesn't realize that he's bored and unhappy until the war comes along. He is drafted, becomes an officer, impregnates and falls in love with a French girl and is awarded the Silver Star. When he returns to the states, his wife and the $12,000 per year job, he has changed; he is described as not quite "around." He is capable of patriotic platitudes. He is disappointed that his best friend, a war-time colleague, can be content with the trivial task of being a magazine executive after the "great enterprise" to which they once belonged. Agatha worries that David "may suddenly turn out to be an intellectual." And David even philosophizes.

Mr. Horgan never really accounts for David's astonishing change. There are some vague suggestions: the horrors of war, military camaraderie, the French girl. But if we accept these reasons then we deny the whole point of David's character, which is that he is the very man upon whom these things should have the least effect.

Despite the fact that *Give Me Possession* is badly made, it is not entirely bad. Mr. Horgan is intelli-

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gent and some of his remarks, if dramatically unconvincing, are profound. Further than this, his theme is a serious one and needs to be dealt with. For too long now it has been the rage both in America and on the Continent to use bourgeoisie as pawns—to treat them as the archetypes of complacency, as a breed incapable of spiritual longing and fulfillment.

Mr. Horgan, if he has not accomplished his intention, has at least recognized the need for a novel which will deal seriously and sympathetically with that mysterious tribe which David Riesman has labeled the "peer group."

Constant Challenge

THE AMERICAN OASIS. By Edward Higbee. Knopf. $5.

By ERNST F. WINTER

TWENTY-FIVE per cent of the continental U. S. is arable, which is a great deal compared to ten per cent for Russia or four per cent for Canada. We have nearly four good acres for every person, France one and a half, and India less than one. Our great regional diversity harbors every clime, crop and soil. And yet, increasingly, the prophets of doom are depicting ours as the wastelands of tomorrow, pointing to the ravages of erosion, the flight from farm work, and drought and pests.

This is the subject, vital to an urbanite society (1820: eighty-three per cent occupied in agriculture; 1955: eleven per cent), elucidated by Mr. Higbee in this illustrated and factual volume. His is the first complete historical account of the way farmers have treated the soil from colonial times to the present.

Here we witness America building an oasis of plenty. The first immigrants, usually with urban backgrounds, combined subsistence farming with trading and profit. This molded early agrarian attitudes. Later the peasant immigrant from the Continent evolved from this the family-operated commercial farm. A hybrid agriculture, part European and part Indian, began to plunder the land. The abundance of cheap land stimulated heavy, soil-depleting, cash crops like tobacco, cotton, corn and wheat. America's specialty became raising more food and fibre per man with more agricultural machinery than all the rest of the world combined.

Machines reduced costs and made profits possible despite soil destruction. Fast-growing cities enticed with fast-growing markets. The indiscriminate commercial application of science finally produced the plague of surplus, the costs of price support, as well as the liquidation of one million family farms since 1935.

With the astounding progress in changing the agricultural heritage in man's image and likeness came new problems. The great Federal reclamation dam structures have made irrigation of deserts a reality. Yet, thirty-eight per cent of these reservoirs have a life expectancy of less than thirty years; eighty-three

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Mr. Higbee is confident that the American farmer has the ability to do the most effective job of land management in history. He sees great hope, for example, in the "new frontier" South where cotton, corn, tobacco and tenancy are giving way to balanced cattle, dairy, grain and grassland farming. Despite his findings and expressed conviction that "fewer than ten per cent do as good a job as possible," Mr. Higbee remains an optimist.

He anchors his faith on several noteworthy conclusions. As soil-conservationist, professor and practical farmer he has clearly recognized the soil as a living organism. Secondly, he relates the success of men of good will and of foresight who think in terms of decades and cooperation with Nature. Thirdly, Higbee advocates increased federal soil conservation. The entire book, in fact, is rich in practical suggestions.

The philosophy underlying these suggestions remains most intriguing, for it involves the unresolved paradox of what Father Ong praises as "American optimism" and Mr. Wilhelmsen castigates as its bankruptcy. Mr. Higbee states that "this is a commercial world" and a future agriculture has to adjust itself to

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this environment by making more money and spending more of it on new ideas, new techniques and new practices. The results from the infinite realm of scientific agricultural research are to be applied to the American farm, large and small, through "private attention of the specialist."

To find only in scientific research salvation for the farming life constitutes the weakness of an otherwise fruitful book. As the N.C.R.L.C. (National Catholic Rural Life Conference) reminds us, "farming is a partnership with Almighty God . . . the natural habitat of the family." Not the predominance of brilliant science, nor the solicitous specialist, nor the inundation with commercially exploited scientific discoveries offers American agriculture a sound future. What is primarily needed is an agrarian ethos to awaken the family farmers' inner resources and their responsibility to husband the land; to love the life and work on it beyond "commercialism," as a stewardship for Him, a service to one's fellow-man's well-being and a making of a livelihood.

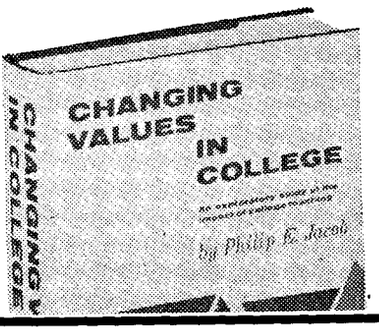
A healthy agriculture cannot be an extension of the laboratory, an abdication to the specialist, a major market for every conceivable industrial product. The farmer of the future loves and knows Nature; delves with reverence ever deeper into the process of life and growth; guarantees health to the nation. He will accept genuine help from many quarters. But agriculture will remain the personal responsibility of the steward. To live the life beyond optimism and pessimism is and will remain, apparently for some time, a challenge to both the farmer and our society.

REVIEWERS

Thomas F. Curley, a novelist and critic who has a special interest in Victorian writers, is a regular reviewer for The Commonweal.

James P. Degnan is on the staff of Communications Arts at the University of Florida.

Ernst F. Winter is a member of the faculty of Iona College, New Rochelle, N.Y.



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